

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 1, 2024

Neal Mohan
Chief Executive Officer
Google LLC, D/B/A YouTube
901 Cherry Avenue
San Bruno, CA 94066

Dear Mr. Mohan:

We are writing to you concerning YouTube's current implementation of new age restrictions on content related to firearms. While we commend YouTube's recent policy changes, we believe there are additional steps that can be taken to address outstanding gaps in enforcement and ensure that underage users are not exposed to potentially dangerous or inappropriate content.

A recent [report](#) published by the Tech Transparency Project (TTP) revealed alarming instances in which YouTube failed to restrict firearm content for a test account belonging to a 14-year-old individual. In these investigations of YouTube's current guardrails to protect young users, the account was not only able to access gun-specific videos on the site with ease but was also recommended firearm content that should have been blocked otherwise. For example, when the test user in this investigation entered certain words or phrases in YouTube's search feature such as the word "glock," the site's search results suggested a video showing an individual firing a Glock pistol equipped with a switch – also known as an auto-sear – which enables a semiautomatic pistol (like a Glock pistol) to fire like a machine gun. Auto-sears are largely illegal in the United States because they allow unlicensed individuals to wield weapons that have been converted to have the same capacity as a machinegun, thus meeting the [legal definition](#) of a machinegun under the National Firearms Act. The test user was still able to access this video despite YouTube's [firearms policy](#) clearly stating that content showing use of "Accessories that convert a firearm to automatic fire, such as: bump stocks, gatling triggers, drop-in auto-sears, or conversion kits," will be age restricted.

According to the report, YouTube did cite these age restrictions when blocking one short video that surfaced when searching the words "glock switch." However, in another instance, when the test user searched for the phrase "how to put a...", the platform, again, directed the test user to content that is supposed to be age restricted by suggesting that the phrase be completed as "how to put a switch on a glock." More troubling still, when the "teen" began typing "how to 3D," one of the suggested searches was "how to 3D print a glock switch." TTP's report also cited instances in which the user was shown advertisements when accessing gun videos that should have been blocked. In other words, as TTP Director Katie Paul has [said](#), "YouTube is profiting from its failure to enforce its own firearm policies."

Although we commend you for the work YouTube has done to protect minors from this content, we are concerned that the site is still allowing underage users to access dangerous and deeply problematic videos. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has deemed auto-sears and similar conversion devices that turn rifles into automatic weapons, an

“emerging threat.” In fact, last year, the ATF reported that from 2017 through 2021, it recovered 5,454 such devices, a 570 percent increase over the previous five-year period.¹ This fact is made even more disturbing when paired with reporting from The Trace and Vice which found that auto-sears were involved in dozens of shootings by extremists, mass shooters, and drug traffickers.² These devices are extremely unsafe and largely illegal in the United States, and, as such, we do not believe that content on how to use or create them should be funneled to our most vulnerable.

While [public pressure](#) — including advocacy by Everytown for Gun Safety and Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg — led YouTube to revise its firearms content policies in June 2024, policies are only as effective as their enforcement. At a time when the scourge of gun violence continues to plague our communities, we are concerned that if YouTube does not uphold its own age restrictions and properly enforce its new policies designed to protect children and teens that use its platform, our communities will ultimately suffer the consequences. Therefore, we request that you provide an update on your plans to resolve any outstanding gaps in enforcement and report your progress in addressing these concerns.

Thank you, and we look forward to hearing from you on this issue.

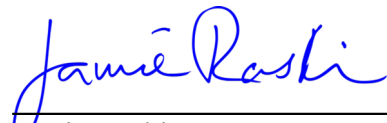
Sincerely,



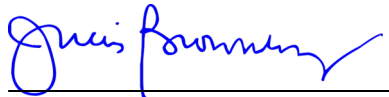
Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



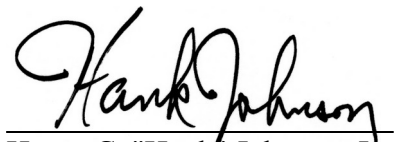
Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



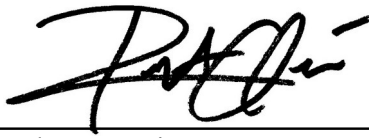
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



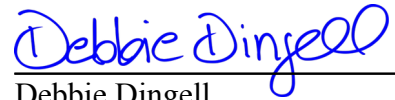
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

¹ Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). *National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA): Crime Guns - Volume Two Report*, 2023. <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-ii-part-vii-recommendations/download>.

² Stephens, A., Hamilton, K. (2022). The Return of the Machine Gun. *The Trace and VICE News*.



Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



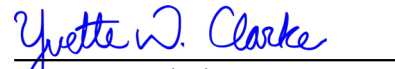
Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



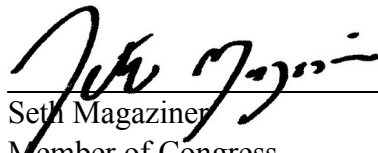
Jim Tokuda
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Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



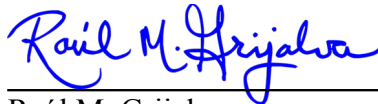
Yvette D. Clarke
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Commerce



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